New oil exploration

*450.PROF. P.J. KURIAN: Will the Minister of PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS be pleased to state:

(a) what are Government's plans to increase exploration in India by various PS Units involved in oil exploration;

(b) whethder there is any formula fixed by Government on the financial ratios on domestic investment in oil exploration and overseas exploration for oil;

(c) if so, the details of such ratios; and

(d) the steps proposed to emphasize domestic oil exploration?

THE MINISTER OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS (SHRI MURLI DEORA): (a) and (d) Government of India introduced New Exploration Licensing Policy (NELP) in 1997 to accelerate exploration in Indian sedimentary basin, which was operationalized in 1999. Under NELP, oil PSUs are not awarded exploration blocks on preferential basis but have to compete with private and foreign companies in bidding process. In the first five rounds of NELP, Government of India have signed 110 Production Sharing Contracts (PSCs) with public sector units, foreign and private/JV companies covering an area of more than 1 million Sq. Km. in onland, shallwo offshore and deepwater areas. To keep up the momentum of exploration, Government of India have offered 55 exploration blocks on 23rd February, 2006 under sixth round of NELP covering an area of 3.52 Lakh Sq. Km. through international competitive bidding. The bid closing date for these blocks is 15th September, 2006. As of now, 31 oil & gas discoveries have been made by exploration companies in NELP exploration blocks.

In addition, Government of India have signed PSCs for 16 Coal Bed Methane (CBM) exploration blocks to harness CBM gas from Coal seams. Government of India have also offered 10 CBM blocks falling in the States of Andhra Pradesh, Chattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Jharkhand and West Bengal on 23rd February, 2006 under third round of CBM Policy through international competitive bidding. The bid closing date for CBM blocks is 30th June, 2006.

(b) and (c) Government of India have not fixed any formula/ratio for domestic and overseas investment in exploration. However, oil PSUs/ private companies have made overseas investment based on the commercial considerations and enhancing energy security for the country. At present, ONGC Videsh Limited, Indian Oil Corporation Limited, Oil India Limited and GAIL (India) Limited are pursuing overseas exploration.

Staff strength of Global Trust Bank

*451. SHRI SHAHID SIDDIQUI:
SHRI ABU ASIM AZMI:

Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) the number of persons working in each branch of the then Global Trust Bank at the time when it was taken over by the Oriental Bank of Commerce and what is their present strength;

(b) whether it is a fact that some of these branches are being run with the skeleton staff of two or three persons only and if so, the details thereof; and

(c) whether the work load in those branches has increased since its taking over by Government and if so, the reasons for not increasing the strength of staff in those branches?

THE MINISTER OF FINANCE (P. CHIDAMBARAM): (a) The number of persons working in each branch of the then Global Trust Bank at the time it was amalgamated with the Oriental Bank of Commerce and strength as on 31.03.2006 is enclosed as Statement. (*See* below)

(b) Out of 88 brancnes, one branch, namely, Shirpur in Pune has a staff strength of three persons.

(c) The aggregate working of the Shirpur branch has increased from Rs. 71 lakh as on 31.8.2004 to Rs. 81 lakh as on 31st March, 2006 and this does not merit any increase in the strength of that branch.